



October 2003

DE retiree celebrates 44 years of service

by Aaron Hendren, Directed Energy Directorate

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The Air Force Research Laboratory's Directed Energy Directorate lost a valuable asset on Sept. 30, when Richard Keppler retired from government service, after a total of 44 years of federal service.

Serving 16 years of civilian service at Kirtland Air Force Base, Keppler ended his career as Program Administrator for Special Programs in the Human Resources Office. In this capacity, he oversaw the Intergovernmental Personnel Act Program for the Phillips Research Site.

From 1998 to 1999, he was the senior technical coordinator for the Cooperative Development Branch here. From 1991 to 1998, Keppler worked in the Office of the Chief Scientist, Air Force Phillips's Laboratory.

Keppler began his career as a civilian in 1987, as the technical coordinator for the Office of the Chief Scientist, Air Force Weapons Laboratory. He was responsible for the implementation and follow-on actions/matters for numerous programs. When Phillips Research Laboratory was activated in 1990, he was responsible for the unification, consolidation, and standardization of the former Weapons Laboratory at Kirtland Air Force Base, the Astronautics Laboratory at Edwards Air Force Base and the Geophysics Laboratory at Hanscom Air Force Base.

From 1982 to 1986, Keppler served as the chief of staff to the commander at the Space Technology Center. He worked as the liaison between the command section and the three subordinate directorates — the Air Force Weapons Laboratory, Air Force Rocket Propulsion Laboratory and the Air Force Geophysics Laboratory.

In 1986, Keppler retired from the Air Force as lieutenant colonel, serving from 1958 to 1986. He retired from military service April 6, 1986.

His military service consisted of tours with the Strategic Air Command, initially as an aircraft maintenance officer, and later as an Atlas "F" Intercontinental Ballistic Missile combat crew commander. He was involved with the Apollo program as a member of the National Range Division. He then serviced two tours in Southeast Asia as an aircraft maintenance officer. Later assigned to the Naval Air Systems Command in Washington D.C., he was Air Force program manager for joint missile programs such as the shrike anti-radiation missiles, as well as the air to air missiles such as the Aim-9L and Aim-7F.

His initial tours at Kirtland Air Force Base involved the Air and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles. He was later assigned to the Airborne Laser program and eventually to the Office of the Commander functioning as the chief of staff.

For Keppler, retirement is a welcome and overdue transition. For those that work with him, life in the office will be changed.

"Kep's retirement will leave a big hole in Directed Energy," said Leonard Contreras, chief of the Integration and Operations Division of the directorate. "Everything Kep has done within the laboratory, beginning with his being the exec years ago, has been of exceptional quality. He has not only been an important fixture in the lab in terms of his work, but he also provides great morale support for his coworkers. In my mind, Kep is a living treasure." All who have come into contact with him share this sentiment. @



Richard Keppler